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Holiness Acceptable To God

John Morgan

HOLINESS ACCEPTABLE TO GOD

By John Morgan

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"This will be More Satisfactory perhaps than anything I could say.. ." --
Charles G. Finney

Finney included this essay in the original edition of his SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, Volume 2, 1847

"'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow my self before the High God?' This has in all ages been the solemn and anxious inquiry of earnest souls. It is the question of one who has sinned--the question, however, of hope and not of despair--the question of one who conceives that perhaps the High and Holy One may be acceptably approached. But the inquiry presupposes, that whatever God may have done, may be doing, or ready to do for his salvation, the inquirer has a personal responsibility which he must meet, that there are conditions which he must fulfill. What shall I do to inherit life? The question recognizes the moral agency of the inquirer, and the necessity of its appropriate exercise.

It is admitted by all, except utter antinomians, that some degree of holiness or conformity to the divine law, is indispensable to acceptance with God. No one, we think, would refuse to unite with the venerable Westminster Confession in the statement that 'repentance, by which a sinner so grieves for and hates his sins as to turn from them all to God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with him in all the ways of his commandments, is of such necessity to sinners, that none may expect pardon without it.' Still the majority of the church would doubtless, with the Larger Westminster Catechism, maintain that the 'best works' of God's accepted saints, 'are imperfect and defiled in the sight of God.' The celebrated Dr. Beecher in his recent letter on Perfection, exhibits the theory which he has embraced on the subject. We will quote a few of his

questions and answers.

Question 1. What takes place in regeneration?

Answer. The reconciliation of an enemy to God; submission to his will; love to God more than to all creatures and all things. In its commencement, this love is feeble compared with 'all the heart, mind, soul and strength,' according to the moral law; and to qualify for heaven, must be progressively augmented through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

Q.2. How can the help of Christ be obtained, to secure our growth in grace?

A. By renouncing all reliance upon our own strength and merits, and relying entirely on the sufficiency and willingness of Christ to help us, sought by filial supplication, and the diligent use of the appointed means of grace; striving, as the Puritan writers say, as if all depended on ourselves, and looking to Christ as if all depended on him.

Q.3. What will be the effect of such a prayerful reliance upon Christ, in the diligent use of the means of grace?

A. Not perfection; for faith can be no more perfect than the love which animates it; and not including love with all the heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, is always an implication of defect needing an advocate and pardon. The child who cannot go a step alone, may as well exult in the claim of perfect manhood, as those who can do nothing without Christ, in the claim of perfection. But the result will be that they will grow in grace till they die, going from strength to strength, till they all appear in Zion before God.'

The doctrine of these extracts clearly is, not simply that the love of a new-born saint is feeble compared with that of an advanced Christian, but that it is less than the moral law requires, and therefore sinfully defective. These extracts also teach that 'the most prayerful reliance on Christ, and the most diligent use of the means of grace' ever practised in this life, never produce an obedience which does not itself, on account of sinful defect, need pardon. In these views Dr. B. coincides with the representation of the Westminster Confession, that 'they who in their obedience attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life, * * fall short in much which in duty they are bound to do.'

We propose in the present article to seek a scriptural answer to the inquiry, Is any degree of holiness acceptable to God, which, for the time being, falls short of full obedience to the divine law? We put the question into the most general form, intending it to apply to both the accepted holiness of the new-born soul and the holiness of the most mature Christian.

1. In order to an intelligent answer to this inquiry, we must first determine what the requirements of the law are, and in what phraseology they are couched.

(1.) In Deut. 6:5, we find the first table of the law expressed in the fullest form that occurs in the Old Testament: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.' It is remarkable that this emphatic mode of expression occurs, in the form of a command, nowhere else in the Old Testament; but it is once strikingly referred to in the historic account of the character of Josiah, 2 Kings 23:25. The passage is quoted, Matt. 22:37, Mark 12:3, and Luke 10:27, with some difference of words, but manifestly with no modification of meaning. The emphasis obviously lies in the words which we have marked by italic.

(2.) We have, Deut. 10:12,13, somewhat different language: 'And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?' The whole spirit of this passage would be expressed in the words: 'What doth the Lord thy God require of thee but to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul?' The rest is added to make the passage more impressive, and perhaps also to indicate the important truth that inward obedience manifests itself in the external conduct. It is the doctrine of Paul, Rom. 13:8--10, that 'he that loveth hath fulfilled the law;' and this is the doctrine also, so far as we know, of the whole Christian church. The above-quoted passage omits the expression, 'with all thy might,' and yet the introductory words show that the whole content of the law is given. The phraseology, 'with all thy heart and with all thy soul,' is employed, we believe, where emphasis is intended, more frequently than any other formula, to designate the demand of the law.

(3.) We find, 1 Sam. 12:20--24, the words, 'Turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.--Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart.' Here the phrases, 'with all your might,' and 'with all your soul,' are both omitted, and yet who can reasonably doubt that the prophet meant, in the use of the phrase, 'with all the heart,' to enjoin full obedience to the law?

It is, perhaps, worth noticing, that in passages which exhibit the emphatic phraseology before us, wherever any of the phrases are omitted, it is always those that come last. It is always, 'with all the heart and soul,' or, 'with all the heart,'--never, 'with all the might,'--'with all the soul,' or 'with all the soul and might,'--which may perhaps lead us to conclude that the omitted words were in the writer's or speaker's mind, and in the minds of his Israelitish readers or hearers, just as with us, the whole of a familiar verse or even hymn is frequently referred to, when we mention only the first line.

(4.) In Micah 6:8, all duty is denoted without the use of any emphatic phraseology: 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God!' The first part of the concluding interrogation, plainly shows that the whole compass of the divine commands is exhibited.

(5.) The above-cited passages present the divine law chiefly in its relations to God. The precept, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' occurs in the Old Testament only Lev. 19:18. In the New Testament it is quoted as containing the sum of all the law with respect to our fellow men. But though in the ten commandments and in the other precepts of the law, the language of equality and impartiality is omitted, it is always to be understood--an affirmation, which in relation to the second table of the ten commandments, we presume no one will deny. For an equally cogent reason, in the first table, and in all other commands which relate to the Most High, the expressions are to be understood which denote the engagement of all our powers of heart, soul, and might. David adopted this rule of interpretation in his charge to Solomon, 1 Kings 2:2--4. Referring to the promise and its conditions, recorded Ps. 132:12, and elsewhere in similar language, the dying prophet says, 'I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong, therefore, and show thyself a man, and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways * * that the Lord may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children

take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee a man on the throne of Israel.' The original condition of the promise did not contain the emphatic expression, 'with all the heart and with all the soul,' but the inspired interpreter supplies it as being understood. Indeed, it is an obviously just rule of construction, that when several passages refer to the same thing, some of them in more, and others in less specific language, the more specific passages should govern the interpretation of the less specific.

Perhaps some of the preceding observations might have been spared, inasmuch as it is generally admitted that the formulas, 'with all the heart, with all the soul, and with all the might,' 'with all the heart and with all the soul,' and 'with all the heart,' universally have the meaning contended for. They are considered as equivalent, though more or less emphatic modes of expressing the full requirement of the law. To make the less emphatic expressions mean less than the others, is to ascribe to them an utter indefiniteness, not to say that it would make them involve a license to commit some degree of sin.

The language of the law plainly shows that it concerns itself with nothing else than the voluntary inward state or actions of men. If it makes mention of external actions, it is only as the necessary manifestations of the inward voluntary state. When the voluntary state or action of the heart is right, the law has no further demand. It commands nothing but love,--it forbids nothing but its opposite. It knows nothing of any other holiness than love, under it, behind it, or causative of it. It has no complacency in any thing but love, be it found in whatever being it may, man or angel. Nor is there any depravity, corruption, bias, evil nature, or any thing else of whatever name, with which it is offended or displeased, in man or devil, except the voluntary exclusion of love, or the indulgence of its opposite. Disobedience on the one hand, and obedience on the other, are the only moral entities known to the Scriptures, or of which the law of God takes the least cognizance. It demands nothing but cordial obedience--it forbids nothing but cordial disobedience. We say not that there may not be inward occasions of sin as well as outward temptations; nor do we say there may not be inward influences impelling to holiness as well as external persuasives; but we do say that the law of God takes no cognizance of either the one or the other. It concerns itself with nought but the inward voluntary state or action of the moral agent. We are aware

that we might have said all this in a single sentence; but we chose to say over and over again in different words, what we deem a very important and obvious Scripture doctrine, because it is denied or misunderstood by many good man.

The doctrine we have thus laid down, agrees with that which President Edwards urges in his Treatise on the Will, Part III. Sec. IV. 'If there be any sort of act or exertion of the soul, prior to all free acts of the will or acts of choice in the case, directing and determining what the acts of the will shall be, that act or exertion of the soul cannot properly be subject to command or precept in any respect whatsoever, either directly or indirectly, immediately or remotely. Such acts cannot be subject to commands directly, because they are no acts of the will; being by the supposition prior to all acts of the will, determining and giving rise to all its acts: they not being acts of the will, there can be in them no consent to, or compliance with, any command. Neither can they be subject to command indirectly or remotely; for they are not so much as the effect or consequences of the will, being prior to its acts. So that if there be any obedience in that original act of the soul, determining all volitions, it is an act of obedience wherein the will has no concern at all; it preceding every act of will. And therefore, if the soul either obeys or disobeys in this act, it is wholly involuntary; there is no willing obedience or rebellion, no compliance or opposition of will in the affair: and what sort of obedience or rebellion is this?

Well would it have been for theology, if all that the great and good Edwards wrote had been in harmony with the manifest good sense of this passage.

2. Having thus considered the various phraseology in which the law of God is delivered, we proceed more directly to the question, whether full obedience to its requisitions, is a condition of acceptance with God. Those who believe that 'the best works of justified persons are defiled in the sight of God,' cannot believe that full obedience to the divine law is a present condition of the divine favor. They may believe that the law has various salutary uses to the saints, but, on their scheme of doctrine, one of those uses cannot be to tell them what they must do to inherit eternal life.

But inasmuch as some of these passages manifestly speak of the

holiness they enjoin as a condition of justification before God, it may be imagined by some that they treat not of the justification of those who have ever sinned, but of legal justification for those only who practise from the beginning of life an unbroken obedience, in order that sinners may see their need of mercy and grace, and flee for refuge to Christ.

(1.) But nothing can be plainer than it is, that such passages as Micah 6:8, speak of a condition on which sinners may approach God acceptably. A serious inquirer is introduced as asking, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with tens of thousands of rivers of oil! Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' Can any thing be more manifest than it is, that these are the questions of a sinner?

Let us hear again the answer of the inspired prophet; 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' He presents to him the whole compass of duty, and encourages him with no hint that he may come before the Lord and bow himself before the High God with a partial performance of it. What a strange change would be introduced into such passages if qualifying words were to be inserted. 'What doth the Lord require of thee but partially to do justice, to love mercy with sinful defect, and in an imperfect degree to walk humbly with thy God?' Are we to construe Is. 1:16--17, thus: 'If you would have your worship accepted, wash you in part, make you in some good degree clean; put away in the greater part the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease partly to do evil--learn in some good degree to do well?' Does Is. 55:7, mean, 'Let the wicked in great measure forsake his way, and the unrighteous man partially his thoughts, and let him return with the greater part of his heart to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him?' Since these passages and innumerable others like them contain no intimation that less than entire obedience will do for acceptance, those who teach that God will accept less from us, are bound to substantiate their doctrine by irrefragable proofs, or to abandon it.

(2.) Such passages as 1 Sam. 12:20--24, obviously treat of the condition of a sinner's justification. The people of Israel had committed the great wickedness of rejecting the Lord from being their king, and asking for a

human king to reign over them; and God, at Samuel's instance, had sent upon them miraculous tokens of his displeasure. The affrighted people entreat the prophet to pray for them. Samuel replies, 'Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness; yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your hearts, * * * Only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.' Here the condition of even their temporal salvation was that they should serve the Lord with all their heart. Persistence in wickedness--in their refusal to serve the Lord with all their heart--would ensure their destruction.

In Deut. 11:13, obedience 'with all the heart and with all the soul' is spoken of as the condition of even the common temporal blessings promised to the Israelites in their land. 'And it shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, that I will give you rain of your land in its due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn and thy wine and thy oil; and I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full.' The Israelites were already sinners, and to proclaim to them the terms of a strict, legal justification would have been the same thing as to denounce their destruction. The terms of the passage are terms of mercy and suited to their wants as members of the guilty human family. The holiness here demanded, too, was to be practised in this life; for it would have been most absurd to condition the bestowment of temporal blessings, the blessings of this state of existence, on a holiness subsequent to their enjoyment, and not to be attained till the promisees had passed or were just passing into the invisible world. In the nature of the case, the condition must be performed ere the blessing can be bestowed in fulfillment of the promise.

The same observations might in substance be made respecting the condition of the promise made to David, mentioned by him, 1 Kings, 2:4. Here the blessing, though ultimately relating to the eternal throne of the spotless Messiah, was also in part to be given to mortals who had sinned. The condition was that 'they should take heed to their way to walk before the Lord in truth, with all their heart and with all their soul.'

(3.) Full obedience is the condition on which God promises to remove from sinners, judgments under which they are suffering. Deut. 4:29--"But

if from thence, [the land of captivity,] thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.' Deut. 30:1--3,9,10,--'And it shall come to pass when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God and shalt obey his voice, according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thy heart and with all thy soul, that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee.' 'The Lord will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers, if thou shalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.' Joel 2:13--14. "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the Lord your God?' Jer. 29:13. 'And ye shall seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart.' The first and last of these quotations especially evince that the mentioned condition was an indispensable one. No seeking would regain the Lord's favor, but seeking with all the heart and all the soul. It is observable in these passages also, that some, at least, of the blessings promised, pertain to this state of existence. We infer therefore that the full obedience required, was, if it would gain these blessings, to be exhibited in the present life. If the first act or exercise of full obedience was delayed till the last moment of life, it could not place or secure the agent on an earthly throne, or make grass grow for his cattle, or feed him with 'the fat of the kidneys of wheat,' or deliver him from an earthly captivity. But if whole-hearted repentance, full obedience, was thus an indispensable condition of promised temporal blessings, how much more must it be a condition of eternal salvation, of citizenship in the New Jerusalem, of the palms and white robes of the celestial state, of a seat with Christ on his heavenly throne!

(4.) The inspired Solomon ventured to ask mercy for Israel supposed to

be driven into captivity for sin on no less condition than a return to full obedience. 1 Kings, 8:46--49, 2 Chron. 6:36--39,--'If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near; yet if they shall bethink themselves, * * * * * and so return unto thee with all their heart and with all their soul, * * * * * then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven, thy dwelling-place, and maintain their cause.' If God would have accepted from his exiled people less than a return to him with all the heart and with all the soul, the tender interest of Solomon, in behalf of Israel, would have impelled him to found his intercession on the supposed performance of that more favorable condition. The wise Solomon would have been a very unskillful advocate, if he had failed to seize and urge the easiest possible terms. Not thus did Abraham manage his suit even in behalf of the reprobate cities of the plain. He pressed peradventure after peradventure, till he had reached the lowest which he deemed it fit to urge. But Solomon knew that the word of God in the writings of Moses, (Deut. 4:29, 30:2--10,) had proposed no lower terms of deliverance, and so dared not plead that God should dispense with or abate the conditions on which alone he had promised to forgive and restore his banished people.

(5.) Israel, with God's sanction, entered into covenant with him to render full obedience. Before the Lord had given the law from Sinai, he said to the people by Moses, Ex. 19:5,--'If ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine.' 'And all the people answered together and said, (v. 9,) 'All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.' At the giving of the law, the people, filled with awe at the presence and voice of Jehovah, say to Moses, Deut. 5:27--'Go thou near and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall say unto thee, and we will hear it and do it.' 'And the Lord, (Moses says, v. 28,) heard the voice of your words when ye spoke unto me; and the Lord said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee; they have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children forever." Twice after the giving of the ten commandments and the report of Moses respecting 'all the words of the

Lord and all the judgments,' Israel confirm the covenant, Ex. 24:3--7--'All the words which the Lord hath said, will we do. All that the Lord hath said will we do and be obedient.' And solemn covenant-sacrifices seal the sacred engagement. In a subsequent age, in the time of Asa king of Judah, and at the instance of the prophet Oded, all Judah, with strangers out of Ephraim and Manasseh and Simeon, (2 Chron. 15:12,) 'entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul.' At the time of the great revival and reformation under Josiah, Judah, led by their pious monarch, renewed the covenant, 2 Kings 23:3; 2 Chron. 34: 31, 'And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes, with all their heart and with all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant.' Under Nehemiah, the restored captives of Judah, (Ne. 10:29,) 'clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord their Lord, and his judgments and his statutes.' There was no such thing known to the ancient people of God as a covenant to do less than the full import of the divine requirements. God on his part proposed his law in its uncompromising strictness, demanding all the heart and all the soul, and they not only voluntarily assent to the obligation to obey, but covenant on their part, confirming their promise with oaths and the blood of sacrifices, to render full obedience. Nor would any thing less have been a consent on their part to the covenant enjoined by the Most High. No one can reasonably imagine that he would have accepted a vow to yield him partial obedience. But can it ever be right, not only to vow but swear full, whole-hearted allegiance, unless the inferior covenanting party has a reasonable prospect of keeping his vow and oath? Could he do it honestly if he knew with absolute certainty that he would violate his covenant during his whole subsequent earthly existence? Could he do it with the divine approbation if he even knew that at the very time of his oath he was in his heart commencing its violation? Would not this be the most awful lying and perjury that could be committed? For aught we can see, the vows and covenant oaths of the people of God must have contemplated a partial or less than whole-hearted and whole-souled obedience--a covenant which God never enjoined--or they must have had a fair prospect and hope of fulfilling their vows--a prospect and hope

which they could not have had if they knew absolutely that they would live all their lives in partial disobedience.

(6.) Individual inspired saints have made the same vows of whole-hearted service. Ps. 9:1; 111:1; 138:1; 119:34--69; 'I will praise thee O Lord, with my whole heart. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. The proud have forged a lie against me; but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.' All the observations under the last head might be repeated here. We would state more explicitly a principle involved in them, that since God, on his part, in the covenant, never proposed partial obedience, and a promise of such obedience would have been no assent to his covenant, all the acceptable vows of the saints recorded in the Bible, however expressed, are to be understood as contemplating obedience with all the heart and with all the soul.

(7.) The Bible declares of saints that they have actually rendered full obedience. It is said of Caleb, Nu. 14:24, 'My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went.' Deut. 1:36, 'To him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the Lord.' Of Joshua and Caleb, (Nu. 32:12,) it is said[:] 'They have wholly followed the Lord.' The same language is employed, 1 Kings 11:6, with respect to David. God sentences the Israelites in the wilderness, Nu. 32:11, 'Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me.' Solomon is sentenced (1 Kings, 11:11, compare verse 11) to lose his kingdom because 'he went not after the Lord fully as did David his father,' and thus failed 'to keep the Lord's covenant.' The original Hebrew phrase in all these places is the same, though translated into somewhat different English. Gesenius, surpassed by no one in Hebrew lexicography, explains the phrase to mean 'to yield God full obedience.' Leopold in his lexicon renders it 'integra obedientia Jovam sequi,' that is, to follow Jehovah with entire obedience. In reference to David, God says to Jeroboam 1 Kings 14:8, 'Thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes.' It is recorded of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. 22:9, that 'he sought the Lord with all his heart.' Of Josiah the

inspired record is, 2 Kings 23:25, 'And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses, neither after him arose there any like him.' On this remarkable passage we observe,

[1.] Its language is manifestly copied from Deut. 6:2, where the mode of expression is the most emphatic known to the writers of the Old Testament in proclaiming the law of the Lord, and therefore the design of the writer of this book is to declare that Josiah 'turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might' according to the requisition of that emphatic passage.

[2.] The expressions, 'like unto him was there no king before him, neither after him arose there any like him,' are to be understood, not of his turning to the Lord with all his heart, but of the comprehensive reformation he effected, extending to all the institutions of Moses. As Matthew Henry has well expressed it, 'he was a none-such as a reformer;' he had the abilities and influence which qualified him for that work. But Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:5,) received the praise of a none-such in faith, as the same venerable commentator says: 'He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.' In the fearful invasion of Sennacherib, he was placed in circumstances to call for the manifestation of an exalted faith such as the circumstances of no other pious king demanded. The piety of every saint will have its type and direction determined by the original cast of his constitution, and the influences and emergencies among which He is situated. If he meets the particular responsibilities which God has imposed on him, he is accepted; but if He fails to meet them, he sins and falls under condemnation.

With reference to the covenant entered into by Judah in the time of king Asa, it is recorded, 2 Chron. 15:15, 'And all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart and sought [the Lord] with their whole desire. We have seen that all the people stood with Josiah to the covenant to walk after the Lord with all their heart and with all their soul. In 2 Chron. 34:32, in immediate connexion with this transaction, it is declared, 'that the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.' Now we have seen that this covenant was not merely an engagement to serve the Lord in some degree, but to do it with their whole heart.

(8.) Bible saints professed this entire obedience. Thus Caleb says to Joshua, Josh. 14:8, 'My brethren that went up with me, made the heart of the people melt; but I wholly followed the Lord my God.' 'I beseech thee O Lord,' says Hezekiah 2 Kings 20:3, 'remember how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart.' It is remarkable that the lexicographers Gesenius, Leopold, and Gibbs in explaining the word *shaulem*, give both the general signification, perfect, entire, consummate, and in reference to the relation of men to God make it signify at peace or on good terms with him.

Ps. 119:10,58,145, the Psalmist professes, 'With my whole heart have I sought thee; O let me not wander from thy commandments. I entreated thy favor with my whole heart; be merciful unto me according to thy word. I cried with my whole heart; hear me; I will keep thy statutes.' It may be thought that historians or poets in describing the characters or conduct of others would resort to the language of hyperbole; but do the modest, humble saints employ hyperbolical expressions in telling of their own conduct and exercises? Do they magnify their own earnestness and faithfulness--or use the words of simple truth? Two remarks we will make on the passages from the Psalmist: 1. He founds on his whole-hearted seeking and prayers a covenant claim to be heard, to be made a subject of mercy and grace. 2. His belief of his own whole-heartedness did not make him self-confident or presumptuous. 'O let me not wander from thy commandments,' is any thing rather than the language of a self-confident spirit.

In the times of Samuel the prophet, when the ark had long been absent from its place, the sacred historian tells us, 1 Sam. 7:2, 'that all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.' 'And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord and serve him only; and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.' The prophet seems to take it for granted that if they looked for divine favor, they professed to return to the Lord with all their hearts, and he expects them to bring forth the appropriate fruits, by casting away idols, and preparing or rather establishing their hearts to the Lord so as in future to serve Him only, and promises that then they shall experience deliverance from their enemies.

(9.) Those who did not yield full obedience are either branded as

hypocrites or spoken of as the objects of the divine displeasure. 'Surely,' says God, Nu. 32:11, 'none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I swore unto Abraham and unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, because they have not wholly followed me.' It is of these men that the Psalmist speaks, Ps. 78:34--37, 'When He slew them, then they sought Him; and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the High God their Redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter Him with their mouth, and they lied unto Him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast [or true] in his covenant.' It is true that as the next verse tells us, God 'being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not,' immediately. He forgave them in the same sense in which He might forgive the murderers of Christ, that is, he did not at once and forever shut the door of mercy against them; but in the sense in which he 'keeps covenant and mercy with his servants who walk before him with all their heart,' (1 King 8:23,) he did not forgive them or show them mercy. God finally swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest; and the epistle to the Hebrews holds them up as the great warning example of unbelief and consequent subjection to divine wrath.--Heb. 3:7--19; 4:1--7.

God had said to Solomon, (1 Kings 8:4,5,) 'If thou wilt walk before me as David thy father walked, in integrity [tom--entireness] of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee * * * * then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom for ever.' But by and by through the influence of his foreign wives, Solomon's heart was not perfect, [shaulem] with the Lord his God as was the heart of David his father. * * * * And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord as did David his father. * * * And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel.' 1 Kings 11:1,6,9. The external conduct of the renowned king was abominable, but it was traced to the swerving of his heart from 'entireness and uprightness.' And it was with this inward defection that the Holy One was displeased.

When Hezekiah, who could, when he was sick, appeal to God 'that he had walked before him with a perfect heart,' fell into pride, and ostentatiously displayed his treasures to the Babylonish ambassadors, 'there was wrath upon him and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Nevertheless

Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, (both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem,) so that the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.'--2 Chron. 32:35,26. In like manner God dealt with David when he sinned in the matter of Uriah, and in numbering the people. His heart was no more 'perfect with the Lord' when he was perpetrating those crimes than Solomon's was when he was worshipping the abomination of the Sidonians. Nor did the heart of Hezekiah remain a perfect one when 'it was lifted up with pride.' The Bible knows nothing of a 'perfect heart' which retires in its perfection somewhere into the recesses of the inward being and goes to sleep, while the members of the body are employed in adultery or murder, and the thoughts are full of pride. Nor does the Bible make the ways of God so unequal that every sin in one man who has never experienced the grace of God, shall incur the danger of eternal damnation, and that no sin, not even murder, in another whose sins are aggravated by the rupture of all the endearing ties of intimate filial communion and glorious discoveries never made to his sinning brother, shall incur the danger of no severer penalty than God's fatherly displeasure and the withdrawal of the light of his countenance. If 'Christ in the gospel does not dissolve, but much strengthen the obligation' of the law with respect to all men: much more so does he do this with respect to those who have received the richest blessings. If other sinners incur the danger of damnation by their sins, than when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity--since 'there is no sin so small but it deserves damnation,' and such iniquity is crimsoned with the deepest hues of guilt--what peril short of exclusion from mercy on repentance, shall not such a sinner incur? If he incurs not the peril of death, then with respect to him, the law, as to its penalty, is utterly abrogated, and when he is forgiven, he is not released from the danger of perdition, but merely from further manifestations of God's paternal displeasure.

It is sometimes argued that the sins of persons who have been converted, do not bring them into a state of condemnation or forfeit their justification, because the discipline of the Lord is to bring them to repentance. But the true question which determines the relation of the sins of such persons to the divine wrath is, what would they incur if the perpetrators were to persist in them--or were their probation at once closed? The fact that they are brought to repentance by divine chastisements and are then forgiven, no more proves that their sins did

not expose them to damnation, than the same fact proves that the unconverted who will yet be saved, have not hanging over their guilty heads the poised thunderbolts of divine indignation. 'When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.' Ez. 18:26. 'The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression--neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth.' Ez. 33:12. And if a wicked man would save his soul alive, he must 'turn from his sin and walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity.' Ez. 33:14,16. In the day that he commits iniquity--the least degree of it for aught the scriptures anywhere say--his righteousness shall not deliver him from death. If he is spared and space is allowed him for repentance, it is not because he had the least personal covenant claim on favor, but because God pleases in his own sovereign goodness to spare him, not willing that he should perish, just as he spares the countless hosts of sinners who crowd the broad road. After him he cries as after them, Turn, turn, for why wilt thou die?

3. The texts which we have hitherto quoted, have been almost exclusively from the Old Testament. We have chosen to present its testimony chiefly by itself, in order that our readers may be enabled, with less effort, to see the harmony of both parts of divine revelation. On some points we shall have occasion to bring forward a number of other texts. We wished also to expose the falsity of a notion entertained by some believers in the doctrine of Christian perfection, namely, that to those who live under the new dispensation entire sanctification is attainable, but that Old Testament saints were generally, throughout the whole of life, sinfully imperfect. The many texts already adduced appear to us to show very clearly, that under the ancient dispensation, the standard of acceptable piety was nothing lower than entire conformity to the divine law. The covenant blessings belonged to none others than those who 'kept God's testimonies and sought him with the whole heart.'--Ps. 119:2,3.

But if, under the Old Testament, saints could be accepted on no less condition than present sinless holiness, much more must this be true under the new dispensation. For it would be most preposterous to suppose that the gospel, with its higher and fuller communications of the Spirit, has lowered the conditions of mercy. We might safely conclude,

then, without further inquiry, that the standard of the New Testament is at least as high as that of the Old. But for the sake of exhibiting the harmony of the two Testaments, and of further impressing the views already presented, and for other reasons which will appear in the progress of the discussion, we shall take into consideration some classes of texts, which we believe support our position.

(1.) We commence with the Sermon on the Mount. 'Think not,' says Christ, 'that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfil[¹]. * * Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.' The Savior then proceeds to give his exposition of some of the most important of the ten commandments, freeing them from the pernicious glosses of the Jewish scribes. Indeed it is the general opinion of Christian commentators, that whatever other objects the Son of God had in view in the delivery of this sermon, it was one of his main objects to show forth the spirituality of the divine law. Among the precepts he utters are such as these, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets.' 'Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect.' But does he represent, that obedience to his instructions in this sermon, uncompromising as they are, is a condition of eternal salvation? The solemn conclusion is the best reply that we can give: 'Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him to a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not; for it was founded on a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened to a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it.' Nor is there an intimation that any degree of iniquity, unforsaken, would escape the awful ruin.

(2.) We invite particular attention to Luke 10:24--28, 'And behold a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God

with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live.'

The lawyer--that is, a Jewish divine or theologian--to try the theological skill of the great teacher of Galilee, and to determine whether he taught a different doctrine from Moses and the prophets, asks him what are the conditions of salvation. The Savior refers him to the law; and when the lawyer quotes its most emphatic moral precepts, the two which comprehended the whole law in their sweeping import, as containing those conditions, the Savior declares that his answer is correct, and that these are in truth the conditions of eternal life, and that if he would live, he must comply with them.

On this passage we remark: (1.) The fact that the Savior refers him to the Mosaic writings for an answer to his question, evinces that He taught, himself, the same conditions of life that Moses did. (2.) His remark on the lawyer's quotations, shows that in Christ's view, the lawyer had not selected erroneously the two all-comprehensive commands of the law. (3.) The parable of the good Samaritan, told in reply to the lawyer's question about the word neighbor, in which Christ gives us a practical embodiment of the fulfilment of the second command, demonstrates that Christ meant in truth to lay down obedience to the law as an indispensable condition of mercy. His closing injunction on the lawyer, 'Go thou and do likewise,' is a further proof of the same thing. We know of none who do not admit that we must do as the good Samaritan did in order to be saved. Not an intimation is given in this whole passage or its context, that less would do than full compliance with the holy rule.

(3.) We request our readers to consider attentively such passages as declare, that we cannot serve God and Mammon (a)--that we must hate our nearest friends and forsake all that we have in order to be Christ's disciples (b)--that we must sell all that we have in order to buy the field with the treasure hid in it, or to obtain the pearl of great price, (c)--that the violator of one commandment is guilty of all (d)--that the accepted Christian is free from sin, dead and buried to sin--that he is risen to righteousness, (e)--that to him who is in Christ Jesus old things are passed away and all things become new. (f) Let these passages be examined with their context, and it will be seen that they entirely harmonize with the numerous texts quoted from the Old Testament.

(a) Mat. 6:24; (b) Lu. 14:26,43; (c) Mat. 13:44,45; (d) Ja. 2:10; (e) Rom. 6:2,4,7,18,22; (f) 2 Cor. 5:17.

On Mat. 5:24, we quote from the Commentary of Calvin, one of the ablest and most spiritual of expositors, and on the whole, decidedly our own favorite. The extracts are instructive, both as showing the force with which such passages strike pious minds, in theory opposed to their teachings, and as giving a specimen of the best shifts by which they try to dispose of their natural import. 'Christ denies that it can be that any one should obey God and his flesh at the same time. * * Since God every where commends sincerity, while a double heart is abominable, all those are deceived who think he will be contented with half of their heart. All, in deed, confess with the mouth, that God is not truly worshipped except with entire affection, but they deny it in reality, while they study to reconcile things contrary to each other. I will not cease, says the ambitious man, to serve God, although I apply a good part of my mind to the chase of honors. * * It is true, indeed, that believers themselves never are so entirely given to obedience to God, but that they are drawn from it by the vicious desires of the flesh. But because they groan under this miserable bondage, and are displeased with themselves, and do not serve the flesh otherwise than unwilling and reluctant (*inviti et reluctantes*)--they are not said to serve two masters, because their purposes and efforts are approved by the Lord, just as if they rendered him an entire obedience. But here the hypocrisy of those persons is exposed, who flatter themselves in vices, as if they could conjoin light with darkness.' We ask, where, in the whole compass of the Bible, are saints said to be thus distinguishable from sinners? Where are they said to sin --'unwilling and reluctant'--while none of the ungodly are reluctant about it? We know of no texts which can under any pretence be cited to sustain such a view, except the contested passages in Rom. 7th and Gal. 5th--with respect to the first of which we cannot but concur with Tholuck in the remark that 'if the least attention is paid to the connection of this section of ch. 7th with that which precedes and that which follows, it is not possible to explain it of any other than a person standing under the law.' More on this passage by and by. Of Gal. 5:17, we shall, in the sequel, have a word or two to say. If every man is a saint who sins reluctantly, Julius Caesar must have been a good saint, when, about to annihilate the liberties of his country, he reluctantly crossed the Rubicon; and Macbeth, when he reluctantly murdered his benefactor and king.

With great reluctance did the last named villain drag himself to the deed of blood--with quite as much reluctance, according to the great poet, as David debauched his neighbor's wife, and then murdered her generous husband. The plea of reluctance on any other ground than that on which a Macbeth might plead it, resembles a little too much the defence of an ingenious poltroon, that his heart was as bold as a lion's, but his cowardly legs would run away.

President Edwards (on the Will, Pt. III, Sec. V,) remarks most justly, "["]that it is a great mistake and gross absurdity, that men may sincerely choose and desire those spiritual duties of love, acceptance, choice, rejection, &c., consisting in the exercise of the will itself, in the disposition and inclination of the heart, and yet not be able to perform or exert them. This is absurd, because it is absurd to suppose that a man should directly, properly and sincerely incline to have an inclination, which at the same time is contrary to his inclination; for that is to suppose him not to be inclined to that which he is inclined to. If a man, in the state and acts of his will and inclination, does properly and directly fall in with those duties, he therein performs them; for the duties themselves consist in that very thing; they consist in the state and acts of the will being so formed and directed. * * That which is called a desire and willingness for these inward duties in such as do not perform, has respect to those duties only indirectly and remotely, and is improperly represented as a willingness for them."

The great Edwards is not always consistent with himself, nor are his professed disciples. Thus, they all insist that no one can be a good Christian who does not intend or aim at sinless perfection, or, as the Westminster Confession has it, 'purpose and endeavor to walk with God in all the ways of his commandments,' and yet they also insist that it is dangerous error, if not heresy, to believe that any one ever really fully obeys God. All Christians have the will for it, but never do it. 'If there be a full compliance of will,' says Edwards, 'the person has done his duty; and if other things do not prove to be connected with his volition, that is not owing to him.'

(4.) The apostle Paul appears to us to teach very explicitly, Rom. 8: 6-7,13, the necessity of conformity to the law in order to exemption from death. 'To be carnally minded is death; * * because the carnal mind is enmity against God for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed

can be. So then they that are in the flesh [carnally minded] cannot please God.' 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify [that is, put to death, not partially subdue, or half kill, according to the modern sense of the English word, mortify] the deeds of the body, ye shall live? Of how great a degree of sin is death the wages? Do the Scriptures any where teach us that there is any degree of it so small that it does not deserve, and will not receive death as its wages, unless it is put away? It would appear that in the apostle's view, we must be conformed to the law in order to please God. And how shall He 'who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and who cannot look upon sin,' be pleased with less than full conformity to it?

(5.) The whole argument of Paul, in the 6th, 7th and 8th chapters of Romans, proceeds on the supposition that the entire subjugation of sin is indispensable to justification. In vain does a man hope that he may yield himself as a servant to sin, and escape condemnation, because he has taken refuge with Christ. Death (6:16,21,23; 7:5,9,11,13,24; 8:2;6,8,13) is the inevitable result of sin, its wages, its fruit. Legal influences do not avail to rescue the sinner from the power of sin--they rather aggravate his bondage to it, and while sin remains, the sword of vengeance threatens the sinner's life. Now how, according to the apostle, does he escape? By betaking himself to a Savior who will make a partial obedience answer? Or by flying to one who gives him the victory over sin itself? Not a syllable is dropped in these interesting chapters about a partial obedience to the law, a partial conquest of iniquity. The believer has no condemnation hanging over him or inwardly harassing him, because he walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. The law of the Spirit of life [salvation] in Christ Jesus, has made him free from the law of sin, (and therefore of death,) which has warred in his members and brought him into captivity. God, by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sin-offering, has destroyed sin by a capital condemnation, that the former transgressor may inwardly fulfil the righteousness of the law. He is married (7:4) to the risen Son of God, 'so that he brings forth fruit, not to death, (7:5,) but to God. His fruit is unto holiness, (6:22,) and the end is everlasting life. While faith stands, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present and things to come, and every creature in the universe, may assault him with the utmost fury, and in all these things he more than conquers through him that loved him. While his eye is on

Jesus, though he walk a tempestuous sea, threatened by all its roaring waves, it shall do no more than touch the soles of his feet.

We are well aware of the interpretation of Rom. 7:7--25 still current among Calvinistic writers in England and America. It is an interpretation, which, beginning with Augustine, spread, through his great influence, extensively in the church, and gained still further vogue by the adoption and sanction of the reformers Calvin and Luther. But till Augustine broached it, so far as history informs us, the church knew nothing of it. By the whole early church, learned and unlearned, the passage was referred to the experience of a sinner under the law. Notwithstanding the venerable authority of the Reformers, and the high esteem in which they are held by evangelical men the world over, the whole body of pious German commentators, several of the most distinguished in Scotland and England, and Professors Stuart and Robinson in America, have been compelled, by the apostle's argument, in spite of theological bias, to return to the ancient interpretation.

With the exception of the Methodist commentators, we see not how these learned men can be plausibly charged with adopting their views from theological prejudice, inasmuch as they all, so far as we know, held or hold the doctrine of the constant moral imperfection of Christians. Hence Professor Hodge of Princeton, in his able work on Romans, while he tenaciously cleaves to the current view among Calvinists, says: 'There is nothing in this opinion which implies the denial or disregard of any of the fundamental principles of evangelical religion.' But how strong must be the internal evidence in favor of this view, when it has brought over the great body of the most able commentators in the world! To ourselves it seems amazing that any man can resist the force of argument with which Prof. Stuart has assailed the modern view, and sustained that, which, before Augustine, was, for aught history informs us, the universal view of the church. We feel, we confess, an intense interest in the establishment of the true interpretation of this important passage; for we believe that the current false view has done more to hinder the saints and to flatter the hopes of hypocrites than any other single error that has ever prevailed among good men.

(6.) We should like to make some observations on the declarations respecting himself of that apostle and Christian of whose experience and character the Scriptures tell us the most--the abundant and most humble

confessions of past sin, and the entire absence of any word respecting present sin or sinful defect--his modest and yet full profession of consecration to Christ, counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of his Lord, of faithfulness in his ministry, and of his having exhibited so holy, righteous and unblamable an example, that he had in his own life showed his converts all things, especially the very spirit of the all-comprehensive saying of the Lord Jesus, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,' so that in the most opposite circumstances and temptations, he, in the practical sense could do all things in Christ who strengthened him--having no need to tell his brethren to shun his faults, while they imitated his virtues. We must rather refer to the apostle's solemn saying, 1 Cor. 7:27, 'I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.' The impartiality of the Lord's rule of judgment, the same apostle declares, 1 Cor. 11:32, where he gives the ground of the chastisements with which the Corinthians had been visited, 'When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.' Had these chastisements failed to produce the desired effect, condemnation with the world would have been the inevitable doom of the offending Corinthians. The apostle John, who, 1 Jn. 3:20 tells us that 'if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things,' told also the backslidden Laodiceans, though rebuked and chastened out of love, that only earnest repentance could save them from being spued out of Christ's mouth. The Ephesians too, because they had left their first love, are threatened with the utter removal of their candlestick. Repentance alone could avert the stroke. 'Verily I say unto you,' said Christ to his emulous disciples, 'except ye be converted, and become as little children--[not, ye will incur God's paternal displeasure, but] ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' The rule, as we understand it to be laid down in both Testaments, is the same, that 'the Lord keepeth covenant and mercy with his servants that walk before him with all their hearts'--so that even Christians who enjoy the blessings of the new dispensation, which many kings and righteous men desired to enjoy, but did not enjoy them--are thus exhorted by Peter, 1 Peter, 1:17, 'Since ye call on him as your Father, who without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.'["]

Dr. Beecher supposes that the new-born soul is not qualified for heaven;

but that in order to its being qualified for it, its holy love must be progressively augmented through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. We see not how this doctrine agrees with those texts which require us to be continually ready for the coming of Christ, and to be watching for his arrival. Such passages are among the most solemn and striking in the Bible, and their doctrine appears plainly to be, that Christ grants us no time for advancement to a state in which we shall be fitted for his coming, but holds us practically to the responsibility of being constantly ready to welcome his appearing and render up our account.

On the above citations from the New Testament, we remark, that some of them are almost as explicit as words could make them, in favor of the doctrine we are advocating, while not one text of those whose language is less definite, contains a syllable that would lead to a less strict interpretation. Nor can we recall a single passage in either division of the Scriptures, which treats of the question of what is acceptable, and what unacceptable to God, which hints that the Holy One will accept a divided heart, or a service stained with sin.

4. We now proceed to say, that in our opinion, whatever has been the speculative theory of the true church of Christ, its real, practical standard has been the same as that for which we contend in this article.

We never, until recently, heard a discourse addressed to sinners, laying down the conditions of acceptance, which did not insist that a full surrender, an entire consecration must, be made, that all other confidences must be utterly abandoned, and Christ alone become the object of faith and trust. The sermons addressed to backsliders were of exactly the same character, demanding that all idols should be put away, and that there should be a full return to the Lord. We recently asked an aged clergyman who sat before us while we were, in a sermon, making a similar statement, and whom we had not till then even seen, whether this was not the character of all the preaching he had ever heard, and his reply accorded with our own views. Another clergyman, nearly ninety years old, who remarkably retains the vigor of his mind, spontaneously told us that he had himself often insisted, in his ministry, as all other ministers did, on the same unqualified obedience, and then, like as not, on the next Sabbath, preached a discourse teaching, unwittingly, a totally inconsistent doctrine.

We shall now present our readers with a number of quotations from evangelical divines, chiefly from the renowned and pious Pres. Edwards, showing that we make no rash assertion. Indeed, some of the language of Edwards is stronger than we have thought it expedient to use. We do not pretend that Edwards and other evangelical divines are self-consistent. Like our aged friend above referred to, they have preached one thing at one time and another thing at another, and even palpable contradictions in the same sermon, and even in the same paragraph. But the spirit and soul of their faith we believe to be embodied in such passages as the following, rather than in those of an opposite character.

We begin with Dr. Beecher speaking in the very extracts cited in the commencement of this article. We doubt not that if Dr. B. should publish unaltered the sermons which have been instrumental in converting sinners and reclaiming backsliders, they would furnish us with much more explicit statements.

'Question 2, How can the help of Christ be obtained to secure our growth in grace?

Answer. By renouncing all reliance on our own strength and merits, and relying entirely on the sufficiency and willingness of Christ to help us, sought by filial supplication and the diligent use of the appointed means of grace: striving, as the Puritan writers say, as if all depended on ourselves, and looking to Christ as if all depended on him.'

What if the Doctor says that this is a faith and striving sinfully defective? Does God command us to do any thing more than 'to strive as if all depended on ourselves and look to Christ as if all depended on him?' When a man does this, his conscience in its inner depths is at peace, though false theory may disturb the surface with shallow rufflings.

We quote a single passage from Baxter, whose writings are full enough of the sinfulness of the saints:

'If you would be truly converted, be sure that you make an absolute resignation of yourselves and all that you have to God.'--Orme's Life of Baxter, Vol. 2, p. 82.

We translate a passage from Calvin, on Matt. 13:44--46, which will show where the practical heart of the great and good reformer was, notwithstanding the contrary teachings which he wrote elsewhere.

'We now have the sum of both parables, that those are fit to apprehend the grace of the Gospel, who, postponing to it all other objects of desire,* (* Qui ad eam potiendam sua studia et se totos addicunt.) apply their zealous efforts and their whole being to gaining possession of it. * * Still, it is asked, whether we must renounce all other good things that we may enjoy eternal life. I reply, briefly, that this is the simple sense of the words, that the Gospel is not regarded with just honor, unless with us it excels all the wealth, delight, honor and advantages of the world, and indeed, to that degree, that for the sake of the spiritual good which it promises us, we contentedly neglect whatever things draw us away from it: for it behoves those who aspire to heaven to be freed from all hindrances. Therefore Christ exhorts his faithful ones to nothing else than the surrender of those things which are adverse to piety. Meanwhile, he concedes that they may use and enjoy God's temporal benefits, as if they did not use them.'

The excellent Doddridge gives the following as part of a proper form for entering into covenant with the Lord:--

'This day do I, with the utmost solemnity, surrender myself to Thee. I renounce all former lords that have had dominion over me; and I consecrate to Thee all that I am, and all that I have; the faculties of my mind, the members of my body, my worldly possessions, my time and my influence over others; to be all used entirely for thy glory, and resolutely employed in obedience to Thy commands, as long as Thou continuest me in life; with an ardent desire and humble resolution to be Thine through the endless ages of eternity; ever holding myself in an attentive posture to observe the first intimations of Thy will, and ready to spring forward with zeal and joy to the immediate execution of it.

To thy direction also I resign myself, and all I am and have, to be disposed of by thee in such a manner as thou shalt in thine infinite wisdom judge most subservient to the purposes of thy glory. To thee I leave the management of all events, and say without reserve, not my will, but thine be done.'--Rise and Prog. ch. 17.

We now proceed to our citations froth Pres. Edwards, from whom we give more than from any other author because we find him to be more full and explicit on this subject than any other writer we have consulted, and because his authority and influence are greater among American

Calvinists.

'If ever men come to have any true hope, they must take sin, which is the troubler, and all which belongs to it, even that which seems most dear and precious, though it be as choice as Achan's silver and wedge of gold, and utterly destroy them, and burn them with fire, to be sure to make an utter end of them,--as it were, bury them and raise over them a great heap of stones, to lay a great weight upon them to make sure of it that they shall never rise more. Yea, and thus they must serve all his sons and daughters. They must not save some of the accursed brood alive. All the fruits of sin must be destroyed. There must not be some dear sinful enjoyment, some pleasant child of sin spared; but all must be stoned and burned.

Sin is slain in the godly after trouble and darkness, and before the renewing of comfort in these three ways:

1. It is slain as to former degrees of it. All remains of corruption are not extirpated. Sin does not cease to be in the heart; but it ceases to be in such strength as it has been.

3. It is totally and perfectly slain in his will and inclination. There is that renewed opposition made against it, which implies a mortal inclination and design against it. What the saint seeks, when he comes to himself after a time of great declension, is to be the death of sin, which has been so prevalent in him, and perfectly to extirpate it. He acts in what he does as a mortal enemy: and if he does not perfectly destroy it at one blow, it is not for want of inclination, but for want of strength.'--Works, Vol. 8, pp. 77,87.

We find here a noticeable instance of those strange contradictions of which we have spoken; and yet how does the Christian heart of the erring theologian shine through his false philosophy! The sermon from which we take the preceding extracts, was written before his Treatise on the Will. From this famous Treatise we select a short passage as the best antidote to the mixture of false philosophy in the eloquent extracts from the earlier sermon.

'If there be such a sincerity, and such a degree of it as there ought to be, and there be any thing further which the man is not able to perform, or which does not prove to be connected with his sincere desires and endeavors, the man is wholly excused and acquitted in the sight of God; his will shall surely be accepted for his deed: and such a sincere will and endeavor is all that in strictness is required of him by any command of God.'--Works, Vol. 2, pp. 171.

Now in the case supposed in our previous citations, 'sin was totally and perfectly slain in the will and inclination.' This is, according to Edwards himself, all that any command of God requires.

The following passages from the work on the Affections, we present without note or comment. They will speak for themselves. They may all be found under the Twelfth Sign of Gracious Affections.

'They that are God's true servants, do give up themselves to his service, and make it as it were their whole work, therein employing their whole hearts, and the chief of their strength; Phil. 3;13--'This one thing I do.'"

'What makes men partial in religion is, that they seek themselves, and not God, in their religion, not for its own excellent nature, but only to serve a turn. He that closes with religion only to serve a turn, will close with no more of it than he imagines serves that turn; but he that closes with religion for its own excellent and lovely nature, closes with all that has that nature: he that embraces religion for its own sake, embraces the whole of religion.'

'The Holy Scriptures do abundantly place sincerity and soundness in religion, in making a full choice of God as our only Lord and portion, forsaking all for Him, and in a full determination of the will for God and Christ, on counting the cost; in our hearts closing and complying with the religion of Jesus Christ, with all that belongs to it, embracing it with all its difficulties; as it were hating our dearest earthly enjoyments, and even our own lives, for Christ; giving up ourselves, with all that we have, wholly and forever, unto Christ, without keeping back any thing, or making any reserve; or, in one word, in the great duty of self-denial for Christ; or in denying, that is, as it were, disowning and renouncing ourselves for Him, making ourselves nothing that He may be all.'

'Moses insisted that Israel's God should be served and sacrificed to; Pharaoh was willing to consent to that; but would have it done without his parting with the people; Go sacrifice to your God in the land, says he, Ex. 8;25. So, many sinners are for contriving to serve God, and enjoy their lusts too. Moses objected against complying with Pharaoh's proposal, that serving God and yet continuing in Egypt under their task-masters, did not agree together and were inconsistent one with another; (there is no serving God, and continuing slaves to such enemies of God at the same time.) After this, Pharaoh consented to let the people go, provided they would not go far away: he was not willing part with them finally, and therefore would have them within reach. So do many hypocrites with respect to their sins. Afterwards pharaoh consented to let the men go, if they would leave the women and children, Ex. 10:8--10. And then after that, when God's hand was yet harder upon him, he consented that they should go, even women and children, as well as men, provided they would leave their cattle behind; but he was not willing to let them go, and all that they had, Ex. 10;54. So it oftentimes is with sinners; they are willing to part with some of their sins, but not all; they are brought to part with the more gross acts of sin, but not to part with their lusts, in their lesser indulgences of them. Whereas we must part with all our sins, little and great; and all that belongs to them, men, women, children and cattle. they must all be let go; with their young, and with their old, with their sons, and with their daughters, with their flocks, and with their herds, there must not be an hoof left behind; as Moses told Pharaoh, with respect to the children of Israel.'

'Thus it is essential to Christianity that we repent of our sins, that we be convinced of our sinfulness, and that we are sensible we have justly exposed ourselves to God's wrath, and that our hearts do renounce all sin, and that we love Him above all, and are willing for his sake to forsake all, and that we do give up ourselves to be entirely and forever his, &c. Such things as these do as much belong to the essence of Christianity, as the belief of any of the doctrines of the gospel: and therefore the profession of them does as much belong to a Christian profession.

'They should profess their faith in Jesus Christ, and that they embrace Christ, and rely upon Him as their Savior, with their whole hearts, and that they do joyfully entertain the gospel of Christ. Thus Philip, in order to baptizing the eunuch, required that he should profess that he believed

with all his heart."

'For persons to profess those things wherein the essence of Christianity lies, is the same thing as to profess that they experience those things. Thus for persons solemnly to profess, that, in a sense and full conviction of their own utter sinfulness, misery, and impotence, and totally undone state as in themselves, and their just desert of God's utter rejection and eternal wrath, without mercy, and the utter insufficiency of their own righteousness, or any thing in them, to satisfy divine justice, or recommend them to God's favor, they do only and entirely depend on the Lord Jesus Christ, and his satisfaction and righteousness; that they do with all their hearts believe the truth of the gospel of Christ; and that in a full conviction and sense of his sufficiency and perfect excellency as a Savior, as exhibited in the gospel, they do with their whole souls cleave to Him, and acquiesce in Him, as the refuge and rest of their souls, and fountain of their comfort; that they repent of their sins, and utterly renounce all sin, and give up themselves wholly to Christ, willingly subjecting themselves to Him as their King; that they give Him their hearts and their whole man: I say, for persons solemnly to profess such things as these, as in the presence of God, is the same thing, as to profess that they are conscious of, or do experience such thing in their hearts.'

5. We shall now offer our readers a few quotations from hymns which are favorites with the saints, not merely as showing the sentiments of their authors, but as expressing the hearts of the people of God.

'Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.'

'Thee my new Master now I call,
And consecrate to Thee my all.'

'Creatures no more divide my choice,
I bid them all depart.'

'Here, Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I can do.

'Welcome, welcome, dear Redeemer,
Welcome to this heart of mine;
Lord, I make a full surrender,
Every power and thought be thine:
Thine entirely,--
Through eternal ages thine.'
'Had I a thousand hearts to give,
Lord, they should all be thine.'

Is this the language of truth, or of fulsome flattery? Do the saints tell the Lord that they would give him a thousand hearts if they had them, and yet not give him the whole of the single heart they really have? We believe they tell him the simple truth, and that, therefore, they are not in sin when this is their natural language. We might, as every one knows, quote much more Christian, devotional poetry in the same strain; but we have quoted enough to show what is the breathing of the hearts of God's saints in spite of preposterous theories.

OBJECTIONS.

1. We shall first consider the passages of scripture which are supposed to be against the doctrine defended in this article. The doctrine with which we are at present concerned is not that of the simplicity of moral actions, nor that of the constant sinlessness of such as have been converted, but simply this, that nothing short of present entire conformity to the divine law is accepted of God. Now, we admit, that if it could be made out that the Scriptures represent the saints as constantly sinful, this would be fatal to our view, though then we should be at a loss to interpret the numerous texts we have cited so as to make them harmonize with the texts adduced against us. But no texts proving or appearing to prove that converted persons sometimes sin or that they always continue to possess some degree of holiness, would lie at all against the views we defend in this article.

We think that candid, impartial persons, after reading and pondering the multitude of seemingly decisive texts which we have cited, would

conclude that it was beforehand improbable that passages should be found in the word of God declaring beyond the possibility of mistaking their meaning the continual sinfulness of the saints. Such minds would naturally inquire whether the laws of interpretation would not admit of a different explanation of such passages, especially as, at least at first view, it appears much more consonant with the character of God that he should forgive only such as put away all their sin.

(1.) In 1 Kings 8:46, we find the passage, 'If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them and deliver them to the enemy,' &c. This text cannot teach the perpetual sinfulness of the saints; for (v, 48,) the offenders are supposed to repent 'with all their heart and with all their soul' of the very sin here spoken of. It is therefore ridiculous to quote such a text in support of that dogma. Besides, the conditional particle if at the beginning, shows that the sin is not spoken of as what would certainly take place, and favors the view of those who think that the parenthesis ought to be rendered, 'for there is no man who may not sin,' a translation which the hebrew equally admits. And finally, the very terms of this passage itself incontestably show, that while men continue in such sin as is here spoken of, God is angry with them, so that they are liable to be delivered up to their enemies; and Solomon asks that they may be restored to the divine favor only if they return to God from such sin "with all their heart and with all their soul." How far does such a passage as this prove that the saints are in a state of acceptance even when polluted with present sin?

(2.) 'There is not a just man that liveth on the earth that doeth good and sinneth not.' Ec. 7: 20. Gesenius, in his Lexicon (p. 858, Prof. Robinson's translation) explains 'There is not a just man on the earth that doeth good and never sinneth.' Thus understood, (and who can show that the interpretation is not sound?) the text is far distant from opposition to the doctrine of this article.

(3.) 'I know it is so of a truth; but how should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.'--Job 9:2,3. These are the words of Job, not speaking by inspiration, but expressing his opinion, as any pious man of the present day might do. If therefore the words meant all that the objector supposes they do, they would possess no more authority than the words of Eliphaz the Temanite, or Zophar the Naamathite, or Bildad the Shuite, except as he was a

better and wiser man than any of them; for he too could 'darken counsel by words without knowledge.' The sayings of each of these worthies are not seldom quoted as if they possessed divine authority, and even the sayings in the Bible of a less respectable personage, who shall be nameless. The doctrine of the Book of Job taken as a whole, is of divine authority, but the utterances of the different interlocutors, except God himself; are no more divine than the words of Luther, Calvin, Whitefield, or Wesley. Thus much in general on citations from Job. But the words cited say nothing at all on the question of constant sinfulness. They speak only of the numberless sins of which every man in the course of his life has been guilty, so that on the ground of law, which requires sinless perfection from the commencement of moral agency, no man can be just with God. The words might be properly employed by a saint who had been a thousand years in heaven.

In a similar manner we are to interpret Ps. 130:3, 'If thou Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness in thee that thou mayest be feared.' Who, uninfluenced by a theory in need of support, would resort to such a text as this! Not a syllable is dropped from which we could gather that the Psalmist refers to present sin. Is it for present, and of course, unrepented sin, that there is forgiveness with the Lord?

'May one be pardoned and retain the offence?'

Ps. 143:2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' What word is here which tells us that the suppliant speaks of present sin? It is God's way to grant mercy to those who 'confess and forsake their sins;' does the Psalmist ask the Holy One to deal with him, as to part of his sin, on an opposite principle?

(4.) 'But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.'--Is. 64:6. The prophet here speaks in the name of the backslidden Jews, who, as he says in the immediate context, 'were all fading like a leaf, and whose iniquities, like the wind, had taken them away--from whom God had hidden his face, and whom he had consumed because of their iniquities.' Does such a passage as this prove that the saints are always more or less in sin? Yet in this sense it is often cited, and it is deemed orthodox for those who, like Enoch, walk with God, to say, 'All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags!' Nothing can be plainer

than it is that the prophet is speaking, not of those who enjoy God's favor, but of such as suffer the most terrific judgments for their sins. On the other hand vs. 4,5, speak of the manner in which God deals with those who obey Him according to his requirement. 'For from the beginning men have not heard, nor given ear to, nor hath eye seen a god besides Thee, who doeth such things for those who trust in Him. Thou makest peace with him that rejoices to practice righteousness, those that remember Thee in Thy ways.'--(Barnes on v. 4, Gesenius on v. 5.) Thus this text, instead of disproving the doctrine we advocate, appears, when taken with its context, decidedly to sustain it.

(5.) 'And it [see vs. 36,37,] shall be upon Aaron's forehead that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts.'--Ex. 28:38. The true meaning of this text may be more satisfactorily ascertained by comparing Nu. 18:1; Lev. 10:17; Isa. 53:6,11; Jn. 1:29; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:24. We adopt the interpretation suggested by these references found in Bagster's Bible. According to this, 'the iniquity of the holy things,' is not the iniquity practised in offering them, but the iniquity for which, by means of them, typical atonement was to be made. The priests and the victims were both necessary to constitute a type of the Great High Priest and Sacrifice who makes real atonement for the people of God, and they were both therefore said 'to bear the iniquity of the congregation of the Lord.' 'The iniquity of the sanctuary and the iniquity of the priesthood,'--Nu. 18:1, may be likewise the iniquity for which the rites of the Sanctuary and the services of the priests made atonement. Other references in Bagster's middle column indicate another interpretation, namely, that, as Aaron and his sons offered the holy things in behalf of the people, if they sinned in so sacred a service, with 'Holiness to the Lord' written on their foreheads, they must bear their iniquity, that is, be visited with judgments for it, even if they repented. But while this explanation suits well Nu. 18:1; Lev. 22:9; Ex. 29:43, and other similar passages, we think the other is much preferable for Ex. 28:38. But neither explanation gives the least support to the doctrine of the constant sinfulness of the saints. The passage contains no intimation that sin is always mixed with holy duties. When, therefore, persons pray 'Forgive us the iniquity of our holy things,' meaning iniquity mixed even with the utterance of these very words, they pray thus without warrant from the word of God.

(6.) 'Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?'--Prov. 20:9. This text sounds as if it were much more in point than any other text which we have ever heard quoted. No one can intelligently deny that such interrogative sentences are often intended as a form to express a universal negative, including an appeal for the universal negative answer to the common sense and common candor of the reader. But that this is not always the import of such questions is plain from an example in this very book, 31:10, 'Who can find a virtuous woman?' The context renders it plain that the writer did not mean to intimate that there were no virtuous women, nor even that there were not many, but that they were scarce in comparison with the multitude of women of a different character. In like manner the passage we are considering, may not mean that there are no persons in the world who have 'cleansed their hearts and washed their hands in innocency,' (Ps. 73:13,) but only that such persons are comparatively rare--that 'strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' In other very emphatic ways the prophets set forth the fewness of the righteous, especially in times of declension. Thus Jeremiah, at a time when certainly a few righteous might have been found in Jerusalem, says, 'Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.'

Another explanation may be suggested. There is a sense in which none but God is good, and certainly the goodness of the saints, though it be sinless, is in this world but a frail, weak thing compared with what it will be ages hence. The hurt done by sin to the adjustments of the passions and appetites, the power of habit, and the associative and cognitive nature, must be great and must take long to heal. Fact shows how often good men are tempted and fall into sin--the dangers which lodge in them and beset them are imminent. It is not for them yet to sing the song of everlasting triumph, and, as if a final victory, certainly never to be followed by the least disaster, were achieved, to shout, 'I have made my heart clean--I am pure from my sin!' The Red Sea is crossed--Jordan is passed--the last Canaanite is slain--and I am settled in eternal peace in the promised land.

We have heard another explanation still, which supposes that the sacred

writer refers to the obligations of God's saints to grace--to the fact that God is the great author of their purification and not they themselves. 'Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am [therefore] pure from my sin?' Were the emphatic I in the original, this explanation would have much to recommend it. We do not say that the absence of the emphatic pronoun is decisive against it; but to us it seems less probable than either of the preceding interpretations. Any one of the three which we have given, renders the passage entirely consonant with our views;

(7.) 'If I justify myself my own mouth shall condemn me; if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse,'--Job 9:20. The observations made on a passage previously cited from Job, apply also here, that did the citation mean what the objector supposes it does, it would contain no divine testimony to his doctrine. The words are Job's and are entitled only to the weight of a wise and good man's opinion uttered at the very dawn of revelation, and therefore not nearly so likely to be sound as the opinion of an equally wise and good man of the present incomparably more enlightened age. But be this as it may, the passage before us can, we think, be satisfactorily shown to contain no such meaning as the objector's cause demands. The current interpretation evinces an utter ignorance or forgetfulness of the established use of the word here rendered perfect. It is used Job 1:1; 8:20; 9:20,21,22; Ps. 37:37; and Gen. 25:27, in which last passage, as Gesenius in his lexicon remarks, it seems to designate the character of Jacob as contrasted with the wilder and more ferocious character of Esau. In all the other texts it denotes substantially the same as the words upright, righteous, and is never used to denote a character to which a good man at peace with God might not lay claim. Thus the writer of the book, 1:1, calls Job perfect; Bildad speaks of good men whom God will not cast away as perfect; and Job himself in the immediate context of our passage says of God, 'He destroys the perfect and the wicked,' by which classes he plainly means simply the upright and the wicked. The Psalmist says, 'Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.' Here plainly real living saints are mentioned under the designation of perfect. Why such a word (and all its cognates) is so used, the objector might, perhaps, do well to ponder. What then does the passage mean? Mr. Barnes has, in our judgment, entirely missed its import both in his translation and commentary, excellent as his work in general is. Rosenmuller on the other hand in his Compendium has hit it exactly. Job

represents that in a judicial contest with God, the great and dreadful and infinitely wise One--frail man would have no chance. Should he please so to employ his infinite powers, he could confound him if his cause were ever so good, and turn every thing to his disadvantage. In his awful presence he would not know his soul, he would despise his life. Therefore he would not answer him--he would rather humbly make supplication to his Judge. In that imagined unequal contest, says Job,

If I should be righteous, my own mouth would condemn me;

If I should be perfect, it would make me perverse;

If I should be perfect, I should not know my soul--I should look upon my life with contempt.

The citation in Rosenmuller from the celebrated Albert Schultens, is so striking, that we will venture a translation of it. 'Even if I were righteous, yet I should not recognize my soul, I should disapprove my life, that is, even if I were plainly sound and conscious to myself of no stain, yet that bright consciousness could not sustain me against the infinite splendor of divine exaltation and majesty, but, however well known to myself, I should be compelled to be ignorant of my own soul, and to disapprove, condemn, and despise a life passed in virtue and integrity.'

Did Job really mean that in the fancied trial, his cause would be actually a bad one, and not merely made to appear bad by the infinite superiority of his imagined opponent, the uniform import of the word here rendered perfect, and that of its cognates, would compel us to conclude that here Job confesses that his three friends are in the right in their controversy, that he is indeed an arrant hypocrite, and that the afflictions he suffers are the overwhelming divine testimony to his masked baseness. But neither with this, nor with any other interpretation than the one we have given from Rosenmuller and Schultens, can the words translated in the English Bible, 'If I justify myself,' be made to agree. These words, by the laws of the hebrew language, never can mean, If I pretend to be righteous, or If I try to make out that I am righteous, but must mean, If I am really righteous, if I really have a good cause. Our English version, if the translators knew what they were about, must mean, 'If I should really make out my case, my resistless opponent would turn even my good arguments against me.' And since the words rendered 'If I say I am perfect,' merely resume the same idea in possibly somewhat stronger

terms, they cannot be meant of pretended but must refer to real perfection, whatever may be the sense of the word translated perfect.

(8.) 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' This text is relied on as confidently by objectors as any text in the Bible; but, in our apprehension, for no solid reason. The meaning turns upon the signification of the word 'sin,' or rather the original word so translated. The principal significations given in Robinson's Lexicon of the New Testament are as follows: '1. Aberration from the truth, error. 2. Sin, that is, aberration from a prescribed law or rule of duty, either in general, or spoken of particular sins. 3. From the Hebrew, the imputation or consequences of sin, the guilt and punishment of sin. * * So 'to have sin,' that is, to be guilty and liable to punishment, Jn. 9:41; 15:22,24; 1 Jn. 1:8; 1 Cor. 15:17, 'Ye are yet in your sins.' that is, are still under the guilt and exposed to the punishment of your sins.' So Bretschneider: 'To have sin, culpam habere,' that is to be blameworthy or justly liable to punishment. This writer also refers to [1] Jn. 1:8. If the views of these masterly lexicographers are correct, 1 Jn 1:8, has nothing to do with the question whether the saints are perpetually in sin in the sense of moral pollution. The passage means simply, If we say that we have no blameworthiness [on account of sins no matter when committed] needing atoning blood and pardoning mercy, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Thus the first part of the verse means the same with the first part of verse 10th while the concluding members have quite different imports: 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Not only so, but if we say if we have not sinned, we commit the awful crime of making God a liar, and his word is not in us.' Even Calvin says on this text, 'By the name of sin not only depraved and vicious inclination is here denoted, but blameworthiness, [culpa] which truly renders us guilty before God.' The learned lexicographers and critics before quoted, justly exclude from their definition 'depraved and vicious inclination,' and confine the sense wholly to desert of punishment, guilt, which may exist and will exist, aside from mercy in Christ, in all the redeemed saints, sinless in heaven, to all eternity.

"When I rise to worlds unknown,
And behold Thee on Thy throne,

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee."

The context demands the interpretation we have given. In vs. 6,7, the apostle says, 'If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, [that is, in sin,] we lie and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, [that is, God and we have fellowship,] and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' The last clause relates, not to moral purification, but to the atoning blood which makes purification for the guilt of the soul--in other words, it refers to the justifying, and not the sanctifying efficacy of the Savior's work. This is the view of Calvin. 'This,' says he, 'is an illustrious passage, from which we learn, that the expiation obtained by the blood of Christ properly belongs to us, when we cultivate righteousness with a right affection of heart.' But if we say that we have no sin, no sin in the sense of guilt, ill-desert, needing cleansing by that blood, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If, on the other hand, we confess the sins by which we have contracted this ill-desert, God is faithful and righteous to forgive them, and thus, by not imputing it, to cleanse us from all iniquity. The use of 'sins,' in v. 6, instead of 'sin,' proves that sin is used in v. 8 in the sense of ill-desert; for though we may commit a sin in one moment, we presume the objector will not contend that the apostle meant to teach that every man is self-deceived and destitute of the truth, who thinks that he is not every moment committing sins. The whole context appears to us, to treat, not of moral defilement and sanctification, but of guilt and forgiveness, and the conditions on which forgiveness is exercised. The phrase, then, to have sin, in v. 8, refers, not to present moral defilement, but guilt, ill-desert, resulting from sin or sins, committed,--when, the phrase does not at all determine.

(9.) 'In many things we offend all.' --Ja. 3: 2. It is no part of the object of this article to prove that Christian never sin, nor to prove that they do not often sin. The text before us will possess no force to support the objectors' cause. till he points out in it some word signifying continually, all the time, or constantly, or till he proves that men may not become sinless, and then again fall into iniquity. This last mentioned notion he cannot establish, unless he proves that the first sin of Adam and the fallen angels, was owing to a germ in them of undeveloped depravity. Nor even then will his case be made out, till he shows that his particular instances fall under a universal law.

(10.) 'Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.'--Phil. 3:12--14. An erroneous translation of one word has alone occasioned this glorious passage to be cited to prove the dogma of constant moral imperfection in the saints. Prof. Robinson, in his Lexicon, p. 812, has corrected this mistake. His interpretation is, 'Not that I have already completed my course, and arrived at the goal, so as to receive the prize.' We will paraphrase slightly according to the true sense. 'I do not act as if I had already received the prize, or had completed my course; but I follow after if that I may lay hold on that, in order that I might gain which, I have been laid hold on by Christ Jesus. Brethren, while I am in the race, I do not act as if I had gained the crown; but this one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' Thus understood, the passage exhibits the apostle as an illustrious example of the full performance of all the duties of the Christian race--one of which cannot be, to be all the time at the goal. But he who runs lawfully, will receive the prize whenever the great Judge shall be pleased to terminate the race.

(11.) 'Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot [more literally, in order that ye may not] do the things that ye would.'--Gal. 5:16,17. It is characteristic of impenitent sinners, that they 'fulfil the desires [margin, wills, that is, wouldings, thelemata] of the flesh.' But, in order that his people may not do this, God has placed his Spirit in them, to oppose and govern these desires. 'Walk in the Spirit,' says the apostle, and ye shall not fulfil[*i*] them; for, for this very end God has given you the Holy Ghost." But how strange Paul's argument appears, if we suppose it to run thus: 'Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil[*i*] the lusts of the flesh; for there is such a struggle within you, between the flesh and the Spirit, that it is impossible for you to obey the Spirit's monitions.' To say the least, the first view presents a little greater encouragement to a soul that would be holy. Macknight, who in the main supports the current view, insists,

however, that the apostle cannot mean 'so that you can at no time do the things that ye would;' for 'how absurd,' says he, 'would it have been for the apostle to command the Galatians not to fulfil[] the lusts of the flesh, for this reason, that they could not at any time do the things which their reason and conscience inclined!' This view of Macknight is not opposed to the argument we are presenting; but still, we think it quite evident that the explanation first given is the true one. It is not new, but was adopted by Storr, one of the great bulwarks of the Gospel in Germany, against Neology. (See Flatt, Vorlesungen ueber die Briefe an die Galater &c.)

(12.) 'If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?'--Heb. 12:7, and see the context. The argument of the objector is, that chastening implies sinfulness, and that therefore, the children of God are always in some degree of sin. But what is the case when the pain of the discipline has passed away, and it has 'yielded the happy fruit of righteousness?' The saints are sometimes (if need be) in heaviness through manifold trials; but not always are they in heaviness with a discipline which chastises their present faults. We deny that chastening always implies present sin, though it may exert upon the soul a salutary disciplinary influence. David's sin had been put away when he lost his child, and when Absalom was permitted to drive him from his throne, as a chastisement for his crimes in the matter of Uriah. It was so too, when the pestilence was sent to scourge him and his people. In fact, our own sufferings, as well as the witnessed sufferings of others, may confirm us in a virtue already attained and unmingled with sin. 'It is plainly conceivable,' says Bishop Butler, 'that creatures without blemish as they came out of the hands of God, may be in danger of going wrong, and so may stand in need of the security of virtuous habits, additional to the moral principles, wrought into their natures by him. * * And as they are naturally capable of being raised and improved by discipline, it may be a thing fit and requisite, that they should be placed in circumstances with an eye to it--in circumstances peculiarly fitted to be, to them, a state of discipline for their improvement in virtue. * * Upright creatures may want to be improved.'--Analogy, Part 1, ch. 5. If these observations of the great Butler are true even of creatures who never have fallen, how much more are they true of beings, the adjustments of whose mental and animal constitution have been disturbed by sin, even though that sin may exist no longer in their hearts! Prest. Edwards, speaking even of the angels, (Works, vol. 8, p. 524,)

says,' They had their hearts confirmed in obedience by habit and custom, having long persevered in perfect obedience, and having often overcome under trials which they had.'

(13.) 'Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.'--2 Peter, 3:18. If this passage proves the constant sinfulness of Christians, it must mean, 'Gradually leave off sin and gradually increase in holiness, till you become perfect, or sinless. But who cannot see that such a command would involve a license to sin in some degree? Our Lord Jesus Christ himself is said to have grown in favor [grace] with God and man, which could not have been, unless his moral excellence had really advanced. But his progress, surely, was not from more to less sin, but from a lower to a higher sinless perfection. Prest. Edwards, in the Miscellaneous Observations in vol. 8 of his works, endeavors to show that all the developments of the divine character in providence and grace, will advance all the holy creatures of God in holiness and happiness. Speaking of the general conflagration, p. 584, he observes, 'Such a wonderful and terrible display of the holiness and justice of God, will be a great means of further sanctifying all the elect universe, setting them at a vastly greater distance from sin against this holy God, and a means of vastly exalting the purity and sanctity of their minds.' Those who fall in with these truly sublime words, will not think that the command, Grow in grace, implies the present sinfulness of those to whom it is addressed.

2. It is said that we might as well interpret such expressions as 'following the Lord wholly,' 'walking before Him with all the heart, or with a perfect heart,' of the sinlessness of the whole life, as explain them as we have done, and that our argument, therefore, proves too much. But it is a plainly just rule of interpretation, that we are to depart no farther from the natural, literal import of words than we are compelled to do. When we say, a man is a person of perfect veracity, facts might show that we did not mean to assert that he never swerved in the least from the truth; but strange would it seem to those who should find out that our meaning involved the idea, that in every word he uttered there was some mixture of lying. When we call a person good natured, we do not mean that he is never irritated or petulant, but we do mean that good nature is his habitual character. In like manner; the above remarkable expressions naturally denote at least the habitual character of the person is spoken of, and, so understood, call for no dilution of their native strength. It would be

strange indeed if they were used of men who in not a solitary act of their lives ever 'followed the Lord wholly,' or served Him 'with the whole heart.' Strange would it be for God's truth, to say of a man, that he 'turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might,' when not a single man since the fall ever for one moment did any such thing.

The passage in 2 Chron., chs. 15,16, respecting King Asa, is instructive, as showing that the expressions under consideration, do indeed refer to the habitual character. It is said of this king, that 'his heart was perfect all his days.' But the seer Hanani rebukes him for his sin and folly in a certain transaction, and the faithful rebuke puts Asa into a rage. The angry monarch goes so far as to imprison the prophet, and at the same time oppresses some of the people, perhaps persons who applauded the courageous seer. Hanani employs expressions in his rebuke which imply that Asa had, in the transaction alluded to, fallen from his habitual perfection, 'The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards Him.' These words plainly intimate, that Asa's heart was not perfect, and threaten him with the withdrawal of the protection of that strong arm which had hitherto defended him from mighty hosts of foes.

3. We have heard the objection urged, that the strong language used of some of the ancient saints, refers, not to their whole character at the time spoken of, but to some particular parts of their conduct, as their devotion to monotheism in opposition to idolatry. But it is to be noted, that the passages speak not of external doings, but of the heart. We not only admit, but contend, that the religion of the heart, will, both inwardly and in its outward manifestations, be modified by the circumstances of the subject. But that a man should be perfect in some things and partial in others, we never can believe till the pregnant saying of the apostle James--Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all--shall be blotted from the Bible. In whatever degree there is a heart for the practice of one virtue, there must be a heart for the practise of all. Even the heathen Aristotle held that all virtues must be possessed by him who possesses one virtue; and this is the doctrine of every theologian of whose writings we have any knowledge. Prof. Hodge of Princeton, does but express the common doctrine of philosophers and divines, when he says in his 'Way of Life,' p. 303, 'The man who is renewed in the spirit of his mind after the image of God, is one who has

that moral excellence which expresses itself, according to its different objects and occasions, in all the graces of the Spirit.'

4. It is objected, that our doctrine makes all the saints equal, except that some may be more constantly sinless than others. This objection implies, that the holiness of the heavenly world is at an eternal stand-still. The holiness of perfect finite beings, on the other hand, must be everlastingly progressive, because they will forever advance in knowledge and in the discipline of good habits, if not in capacity. Sinlessness, it is true, does not admit of degrees; but positive perfection in holiness does. From the holiness of the pious child of five years old to that of Gabriel, the distance must be immense; and the strength of the archangel's virtue must be inconceivably greater than that of the infant soul that worships with him in heaven. So, likewise, had Paul, after his long career of discipline amidst toils and trials, and a man of equal capacity, but only just born to God, been both transferred together to the spirit-world, the holiness of the apostle would have far surpassed that of his new-born brother. Were the Creator now to give being to an archangel equal in capacity to Gabriel, Gabriel in holiness must still be his superior, by reason of the confirming influence of countless ages of virtuous habits, and the superior extent, accuracy and familiarity of his knowledge. We are, our readers will perceive, only echoing the before-quoted sentiments of Bishop Butler and President Edwards.

5. The consciousness of the most eminent saints, is said to be against this doctrine. The consciousness of holy men, rightly interpreted, is good evidence, though we should be far from setting the alleged consciousness of any human being against the manifest testimony of the Scriptures. But the citations from Edwards and from familiar hymns, will tell us what the consciousness of God's accepted children is in reality. The saints, according to Edwards, are 'conscious that they do only and entirely depend on the Lord Jesus Christ and his satisfaction and righteousness; that they do, with all their hearts, believe the Gospel of Christ; that they do with all their souls, cleave to him and acquiesce in him as the refuge and rest of their souls, and fountain of their comfort; that they repent of their sins, entirely renounce all sin, and give up themselves wholly to Christ, willingly subjecting themselves to him as their king; that they give him their hearts and their whole man.'--(Works, V. p. 282.) The hymns tell us the saints profess 'that if they had a

thousand hearts, they would give them all to the Lord.' We never met with a saint who appeared to be truly walking with God, and blessed with the joy of his salvation, who would decline singing this beautiful couplet. Now, when men are conscious, truly conscious of all this, their holy, humble lives attesting their sincerity, their philosophy may tell them that sin is mixed with it all; their theological system and confession of faith may persuade them that the law of God is so wonderfully high, that it is horrible presumption for them to think that they really ever obey it fully; they may endeavor, with Edwards, formally to prove that the holiest saints have in them more sin than holiness; but the Bible and emancipated common sense will decide that their consciousness is not against the doctrine of this article.

6. Another objection is, that this doctrine leaves no room, on the part of accepted persons, for the confession of present sin. What is the Bible evidence that the saints in their acceptable approaches to God, are expected to confess present sin, or that it was the custom of Bible saints to do so? With a view to determine this question, we have examined the whole book of Psalms and the most remarkable penitential prayers in the other books of Scripture, and we have found no such confession. To say the least, they are few and far between, while confessions of past sins and of ill-desert on account of them, are as abundant as could be wished. Indeed, how could sin in the very act of prayer be confessed by persons who believed that 'if they regarded iniquity in their heart the Lord would not hear them.' They knew that they must put it fully away before they could reasonably expect an answer, instead of keeping enough of it in them 'to damn a whole world,' as the way of expressing it sometimes is.

7. The doctrine of this article, it is alleged, necessarily leads to the conclusion, that the saints do not need the constant advocacy of Christ, and that the Scripture doctrine of remission of sins is false. This objection is partly contained in the extracts from Dr. Beecher, and partly in the following passage translated from Calvin's comment on Lu. 1:6--'In brief, Luke has embraced in these two words, [commandments and ordinances] the whole law. But, if in observing the law, Zacharias and Elizabeth were irreprehensible, they had no need of the grace of Christ; for a full observance of the law, confers life, and where there is not transgression of it, guilt also ceases. I reply that those praises with which the servants of God are so splendidly adorned, are to be taken with some

exception. For we ought to consider how God acts with them, namely, according to the covenant which he has made with them, whose first head is gratuitous reconciliation, and the daily pardon by which He remits their sins. They are, therefore, reckoned just and irreprehensible, since their whole life being a sort of exemplar of sanctity, testifies that they are devoted to righteousness, that the fear of God reigns in them. But since their pious zeal is far distant from perfection, it cannot, without pardon, please God. Wherefore, the righteousness which is praised in them, depends on God's gratuitous indulgence by which it takes place, that he does not impute what unrighteousness remains in them. It is necessary thus to expound whatever is contained in the Scriptures respecting the righteousness of men, that it may not upset the remission of sins, on which it rests as a building on its foundation." When we read such passages as this, and the extract from Dr. Beecher, we feel strongly inclined to fall in with a saying we have met with somewhere, that it takes great men to put forth great nonsense. For about what, pray, is the advocacy of Christ employed? About sin, of which men repent, or which they retain? 'Hereby,' says John, speaking of Christ as our Advocate, 'do we know that we know Him, if we keep his commandments; he that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.' And what sin is remitted? That which is 'broken off by righteousness'--or that which still remains in the heart? Or, does God forgive both kinds? Is it the Bible doctrine, that if a man will put away the greater part of his sin, God will, for Christ's sake, forgive him the whole? How, in principle, does this differ from the Romish doctrine of indulgences, against which the great and excellent Calvin was as unmerciful as even his heroic compeer, Luther? The Scriptures always conjoin repentance with remission; and what is repentance of sin but its abandonment? The remission can be no broader than the repentance. To suppose that Christ pardons unrepented iniquity, and covers it with his own spotless robe, is to make him the enemy of the law and the minister of sin. Would not the law have a right to complain if a totally impenitent soul were forgiven? Could the blood and righteousness of even the Son of God make such a procedure square with rectitude? But the least sin is hostility to the law; and were there a race of sinners in the universe none of whom were guilty of any more than the least iniquity possible, how could one of them be pardoned without repentance? But were they to remain impenitent they would, by the supposition, each cherish no more sin than what false theory places in the bosom of the purest saint on

earth. On what principle, then, could one be forgiven, and the other be sent to hell forever? We believe that all would decide, that such a race of sinners must be lost, if they failed to put away their sin, that is, to become sinless; for the supposition is, that their sin is the least possible. On the same principle we argue that there is no righteous ground to excuse mankind from complete repentance. The doctrine of Calvin and Beecher appears to us, to be fundamentally the same with the monstrous supralapsarian dogma of the justification of the elect from all eternity.

8. Another objection, not absolutely distinct from the last mentioned, is, that this doctrine makes grace void, and introduces justification by law. We reply, that we fully believe in gratuitous justification by faith, and that our doctrine only requires that faith, in order to justify, should not be alone; but, as the Westminster Confession speaks, 'ever be accompanied with all the saving graces, yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God, for this life and that which is to come.' Legal righteousness is unremitted obedience to the law of God from the commencement of moral agency. Hence legal justification is justification on the ground of merit, a just claim on reward,--a justification to which no one who has ever sinned can have any title whatever. On the other hand, as Paul tells us, Rom. 4:6--8; David, Ps. 32, describes gracious justification, 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven. whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile'-[remisness, slackness, sloth.] At no height of holiness to which he will ever attain on earth or in heaven, will the pardoned sinner ever forget, that for his past sins he deserves to be in hell, and that he stands by faith in the Lamb of God, that bore the sin of the world. Forever will the redeemed of Christ sing,

'Should my tears forever flow,
Should my zeal no languor know,

This for sin could not atone;

Thou must save, and Thou alone.'

9. The last objection which we shall at present consider, is, that the doctrine of this article does away the need of Christ's continual spiritual aid. This objection, which is one of Dr. Beecher's, proceeds on the supposition, that the sole ground of our dependence on Christ, is present

sinfulness. But this is not our view, nor is it the view of most evangelical divines. The orthodox doctrine is, that all creatures are dependent on God for holiness, free agents though they be; and that the saints will be everlastingly kept holy in heaven, through the indwelling Spirit of Christ. To be consistent, Dr. Beecher must maintain, that when the saints get to heaven, they derive no more spiritual supplies in the way of aid from the Son of God. Thenceforward they are independent, or derive their aid from God out of Christ, whose spiritual connection with them is sundered forever. But, according to our doctrine, it will be eternally true, that the saints will be holy through their oneness in the participation of the Spirit with the Son of God, he being the vine, and they the branches. And fit it is, that those who have sinned, should everlastingly stand accepted only in the Beloved, and in Him receive all the sanctifying influences and joyous communications by which they forever go onward and upward in holiness and bliss.

Our article has grown on our hands to a greater length than we expected. We wished to remark on a number of additional topics--on the tendency of the doctrine we oppose, to discourage and sadden the hearts of the righteous whom God hath not made sad,--on its adaptedness to nourish the hopes of hypocrites,--on its tendency to lead sinners to return to the Lord, like treacherous Judah, feignedly, and not with all the heart--and on some professed principles of objectors, which necessarily involve the very doctrine they deny.

In conclusion, we cannot think it arrogant to say, that those who venture to maintain, that the many passages of God's word, which in so strong language demand the whole heart, in order to acceptance, are to be taken with qualifications, are solemnly bound, either to point out those qualifications in the Holy Scriptures, and not merely to refer us to the deductions of a doubtful human theology,--or to abandon a position apparently so dangerous to souls, nor continue to proclaim a doctrine which mars the Gospel, and in principle makes void the law. If the Bible can be shown to be against us, we trust that we shall bow with humble submission to its authority, nor proceed further to darken counsel by words without knowledge. But while the Bible appears plainly to teach us these views, we dare not abandon them, nor dare we cease proclaiming them, though all the Augustines, Luthers, Calvins, Westminster Assemblies, Theological Seminaries, and learned Theologians in the

universe against us. 'Let God be true, but every man a liar.' But it is delightful to us, to think, that however in appearance divided on this great subject, the church of the living God are in heart and aim 'perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.' May God hasten the day when the wood, hay and stubble which any of us may have unwittingly placed in the edifice of truth, may be burned away by the salutary fires of faithful, fraternal discussion, and naught be left in its strong and beautiful walls, but gold, silver, and precious stones."

THE END.